2018

# Narrators of Change: A Contemporary Study of Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Malala Yousafzai, and Emma Watson

Evan Davis
*Butler University*

BUTLER UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

Honors Thesis Certification

Please type all information in this section:

Applicant Evan Marie Sisson Davis
(Name as it is to appear on diploma)

Thesis title Narrators of Change: A Contemporary Study of Patrisse Khan Cullors, Malala Yousafzai, and Emma Watson

Intended date of commencement May 12, 2018

Read, approved, and signed by:

Thesis adviser(s) _____ Date 5/9/18

_____ Date

Reader(s) _____ Date 5/8/18

_____ Date

_____ Date

Certified by _____
Director, Honors Program Date

# Narrators of Change: A Contemporary Study of Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Malala Yousafzai, and Emma Watson

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of English

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Honors Program

of Butler Univesity

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Evan Marie Sisson Davis

May 7, 2018

# Narrators of Change: A Contemporary Study of Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Malala Yousafzai, and Emma Watson

*"At the end of the day, acting and activism are both about empathy. You're trying to get people to see other people as real and human. And to care." Sara Ramirez*

Personal narratives are an integral part of social movements. They develop compelling personal stories that allow for identification with a larger purpose and goal. Personal narratives also allow individuals to rise up and lead large numbers of people. The element of performance has not traditionally been connected with social movement theory, but focusing on the importance of performance in personal narratives will add to the modern understanding of social movements. Performance is what makes personal narratives and subsequently social movements so powerful. Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Malala Yousafzai, and Emma Watson have all inspired or formed social movements because of their performances of their own narratives. In this thesis, I will study the ways each of these women use their personal narrative to encourage group identification in the social movements for which they advocate. Each woman has developed a distinct, yet relatable personal identity that facilitates connection with large numbers of people. Yousafzai and Khan-Cullors wrote memoirs and founded organizations—the Malala Foundation and Black Lives Matter. Watson also started an organization, HeForShe, and later joined the TimesUp movement. Each woman's performance of her personal narrative in these writings and organizations encourages people to join their social movements—Black Lives Matter, girls' education, and feminism. Khan-Cullors, Yousafzai, and

Watson combine personal narrative and performative rhetoric to facilitate identification and change in the world.

**Part One: Growth of the Social Movement**

The term "social movement" is widely known and used these days, but its definition is blurry and confusing. We recognize Feminism, March For Our Lives, and the Civil Rights Movement as social movements, but what about these movements defines them as *social* movements? Is it their battle against hegemonic ideology? Their inclusion and empowerment of large groups of people? These things certainly contribute to a social movement, but the idea is too complex to be defined by a single idea.

The term "social movement" was coined in 1959 by a German sociologist, Lorenz von Stein, in his book *History of the French Social Movement from 1789 to the Present.* This first definition of the term "conveyed the idea of a continuous, unitary process by which the whole working class gained self-consciousness and power" (Tilly 5). Von Stein's introduction of this term to the world demonstrates a development of academic study on the topic, however the invention of von Stein's concept was not the invention of social movements. Social movements were around long before they were named or defined. In fact, von Stein was able to define social movements only by observing social movements that were already in place. The subject of his book was French social movements, starting in 1789—the same year the French Revolution began. During the French Revolution, the French working

class violently resisted the power that the monarchy held. They overthrew the monarchy in hopes of creating a system that more widely believed in equality and shared resources. Additionally, von Stein's invention of the term "social movement" was contemporaneous with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. At the time von Stein published his book, and subsequently became the first to define social movements, the demand for such a definition was clear and strong.

Since Lorenz von Stein's initial definition of a social movement, which focused on the working class unifying and gaining power, academic research on social movements has increased significantly. One of the leading academics on social movements is sociologist Charles Tilly. In his book, *Social Movements,* Tilly offers a much more complex definition of the term. Whereas Lorenz von Stein's definition only included the working class unifying and gaining power, Tilly works to include more groups of people. He defines social movements as "organizations comprised of . . . interest groups . . . [that] contain the significant strata of society such as workers, women's groups, students, [and] youth [that are] bound together by one common grievance which in most cases . . . [is]the . . . perceived lack of democracy" (1). Tilly's definition highlights that in a social movement groups from society join together to fix a shared grievance. Those groups can be made up of anyone in society; they are not limited to the working class.

Tilly later asserts that social movements are innately ever changing. He asserts that a social movement cannot be limited to the organizations and networks that comprise it or a single person or actor. Rather, Tilly asserts that social movements are constantly realigning themselves and changing, just like society,

people, organizations, networks, and politics. None of these groups and organizations are static and none of them are easy to define. It is impossible to capture concepts of society, networks, organizations, and social movements in one simple sentence. To fully understand these sweeping concepts it must be understood that they are made up of many deeply interconnected parts that affect each other, like dominoes. However, it is important to note that though a social movement is comprised of interest groups these interest groups are made up of individual members of society, not the government or a particular industry. It would be easy for government or industry propaganda to fit into the definition of a social movement as they could qualify as organizations, networks, and society, but the "perceived lack of democracy" (Tilly 1) is what makes a social movement a people's movement, rather than a governmental or industrial movement.

The purpose of social movements is to affect change through the unification of individuals, interest groups, and organizations, but how exactly do they do it? Tilly breaks social movements down in to three parts: the campaign, the social movement repertoire, and displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. A social movement's campaign is its action, its continued demand for change from those in power. A social movement repertoire is the collection of specific actions that a movement engages in to evoke change—these actions can be rallies, vigils, marches, media events, pamphleteering, and public meetings. Displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (shortened to WUNC displays) are a movement's demonstrations that they are serious, committed, and worthy of respect.

The recent March for Our Lives that occurred across the United States is an excellent example of a social movement affecting change. Mass shootings, especially in schools, have been on the rise in the United States for years. Every time a shooting occurs a portion of the general public demands gun reform, usually in the form of legislation. Recently there was a shooting at Majority Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. As usual, a portion of the general public began expressing their outrage and demanding gun reform. The surviving students of Stoneman Douglas High School also got involved. Many of them went public with their experiences and became vocal about their desire for gun reform. They even organized the March For Our Lives that occurred on March 24, 2018. March for Our Lives is part of a greater social movement in America—a movement for gun control. The campaign of this movement is a continued demand for gun control. The event, March for Our Lives, was part of a repertoire of actions that people who are a part of the movement for gun control participate in. They have also petitioned, sent letters and emails to representatives, held vigils, and made phone calls. However, the March for Our Lives was a particularly evocative demonstration. In that particular march participants demonstrated their worthiness through their ethos. Students, mothers, fathers, teachers, religious leaders, and so many others marched to support gun control. All of these people were united in their cause—demanding gun control. Marchers also demonstrated unity by the sheer number of people that marched—such a large number of people willing to show up and march demonstrates dedication and unified purpose. In addition to the official march held in Washington DC, there were hundreds of marches held throughout the United States as demonstrations of

solidarity. Hundreds of marches results in thousands of people uniting to support a singular cause and each of those people were committed to the movement. The weather on March 24th was not pleasant across the country. Marchers in some cities braved rain, snow, and freezing temperatures, but they still showed up, demonstrating their zeal and commitment to the cause.

Both modern and historical social movements reflect Tilly's ideas of social movements, but it his definition is missing the element of performance. Thinking of social movements as performances allows for a deeper more modern concept of social movements. Performance is a crucial component of social movements that pushes them from just ideas to effective movements. Tilly does a good job of identifying *what* happens in a social movement—groups of people join forces to fix a problem. He even aptly identifies *how a* movement fixes a problem—people take up a shared campaign, they employ elements from a social movement repertoire, and demonstrate worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. But what makes those efforts affective? What makes them unique? What pushes a social movement from a series of planned events to a hugely meaningful and impactful movement? They are performances. Every aspect of a social movement that Tilly describes is a performance. Individual's participation in a shared "campaign" is a performance of values. Each action and event in a social movement repertoire is a performance. Displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment are performances of those qualities.

Performances are compelling, emotional displays that push audience members to act. Erika Fischer-Lichte defines performance as "any event in which all

the participants find themselves in the same place at the same time, partaking in a circumscribed set of activities" (34). Social movements fit right into this definition of performance. Social movements mostly consist of events, what Tilly terms a "social movement repertoire," in which people are in the same location at the same time participating in prescribed activities. Marches and demonstrations require people to be in the same place at the same time walking together or demonstrating. A rally usually includes speakers and call and response chants that require people to be in the same place at the same time participating in those activities. Furthermore, social movements work hard to demonstrate their worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. Every matching shirt, repeated hashtag, and body in the street is a circumscribed activity or action that occurs when people are in the same place. These activities are all are all performances.

Fischer-Lichte argues that there are four key parts of performance. The first part Fischer-Lichte identifies is the mediality of performance. Mediality is the way words, thoughts, and ideas are transmitted during a performance. In a performance there is a demand for *something* to be communicated. In a traditional theatrical setting things are communicated from actor to spectator. Next, Fischer-Lichte discusses the materiality of performance. Her term materiality refers to the 'one time only' nature of performance. No performance can be repeated exactly the same or paused in the middle. A theatrical production can run for months and years, but a specific performance will never happen again. Third, Fischer-Lichte discusses the semioticity of performance, or the development of meaning. In a performance meaning can be derived from nearly anything—words, movement, clothing, lights,

set, volume, accent. The meaning of the performance will be different for each spectator, but meaning is created nonetheless. Finally, Fischer-Lichte discusses the importance of a performance's aesthetic. An aesthetic is the type of experience a performance gives. Is the auditorium particularly cold and bleak or warm and colorful? Do the performers affect the spectators or not? Does the performance make you fearful or happy? Together each of these four elements creates a performance.

Fischer-Lichte's four elements of a performance are also present in social movements. Performative elements are most obviously present in the actual actions and events of a social movement—what Tilly calls the social movement repertoire. In those events—marches, rallies, strikes, sit-ins—a clear message is transmitted, the event will never happen again exactly the same way, meaning is created by both actors and spectators, and the type of experience was carefully thought out and tailored to the desires of the organizers. Think of the execution of King Louis XVI during the French Revolution. His execution was a public enactment of the popular opinion that the monarchy should be overthrown. It was an event that symbolized a shifting of power due to a social movement. The message of the execution was clear—monarchs are evil and ought to be killed (mediality). King Louis XVI could never be killed again. Once he was executed as part of the event, the performance of his death was over (materiality). The "actors," or the executioners and executed, were working to transmit a message to the spectators—that the monarchy deserved to die (semioticity). And the experience the performance gave was one of frightening violence and aggressive action (aestheticity).

Another example of a social movement embodying performative elements is a Mayan youth group called Sotz'il. Mesoamerian Mayan lands were invaded by the Spanish hundreds of years ago, resulting in a culture-altering genocide. Not only were Mayans violently murdered and pushed out of their lands, but they were also killed by disease and illness, a common aggressor during colonization. Following Spanish attempts at colonization the Guatemalan government came into Mesoamerican Mayan lands and continued pushing Mayans out. In 2002 Sotz'il, a Mayan youth group, was founded as a form of resistance. This youth group literally performs their Mayan heritage through song and dance. Their performances send the message (mediality) that Mayan culture is still present and important by putting on performances that cannot be repeated (materiality). These performances use song and dance to produce spiritual and cultural meaning (semioticity). The style of performance is also carefully tailored to the group's purpose. They perform in traditional Mayan fashion and tradition to bring back their lost heritage (aestheticity). These performances are events in Sotz'il's social movement repertoire. They draw on their performances to demand recognition of their cultural heritage and to effect change.

Not only are the four elements of performance evident in the activities of social movement repertoires, but also they are integrally important to the definition of social movements. Social movements are made up of interest groups, which are made up of individuals. The simple act of an individual joining an interest group—a women's group, a worker's group, or a youth group—is a performance of that individual's values. By joining an interest group a person publicly states that a

certain issue matters to them. Similarly, what sparks a social movement is a grievance or a problem that brings people together. Thus, in a way, social movements as a whole are performances of that particular grievance. For example, the Suffragette movement in the United States that called for women to be able to vote was entirely a performance of women's inability to vote and by demonstrating that inability, suffragettes eventually won the right to vote.

Another key element of social movements is identification. Without identification there would be no social movements because no one would feel compelled to join forces with others to enact change. No one would act and there would be no movement. Identification is a multilayered process. There are two types of identification—personal identification and group identification. In chapter four of *Self, Identity, and Social Movements,* Viktor Gecas names two parts of group or collective identity. The first important aspect of group identity is group members' sense of themselves as part of a group. This is a sense of belonging that allows people to feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves. Gecas also identifies the importance of a cognitive framework or political consensus that specifies goals, means, and fields of action. This is what facilitates groups' sense of purpose, without which there would be no group. People must feel like part of a group and must understand and agree with the goals of the collective. Collective identification facilitates action by giving people a group that they belong to that has the means to act. Often people question the effects they can have on the world as an individual, but joining groups empowers them to feel effective in their actions.

The 1960 Antiwar Movement in the United States is a prime example of group identification. In this movement, massive amounts of people joined together to protest the US's involvement in the Vietnam War. Each individual believed that the war was a problem and not the US's responsibility and so they joined together to protest. Their identification with each other, or their group identification, contributed greatly to their sense of purpose and the strength of the movement.

However, in order for group identification to exist there must first be personal identification. Personal identification is an individual's connection to the group. Some part of a person's personal identity—who they are, what they've experienced, where they're from, or what they value—urges them to join a group that will subsequently enable them to act and feel effective. Gecas argues that identities "[link] individuals to cultural systems and to social groups or collectives with similar value identities" (94). What a person values leads them to connect with a value or interest group that then connects them to a social movement. Thus, personal identities lead to group identities, which lead to action in social movements.

Gecas argues that the concept of identity leads to better "understanding collective behavior, personal experience, and the relationship between self and society" (93). Just as personal identity leads a person to connect with a group identity, which leads to connection with social movements, so do understandings of personal identity lead to better understandings of collective identity. Improved understandings of collective identity leads to better understandings of social

movements—their actions, campaigns, and relationships with society. Often the identification social movements demand is what evokes the most change.

In this thesis I will study the ways Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Emma Watson, and Malala Yousafzai use their personal identity to encourage group identification in the social movements for which they advocate. Each woman has a distinct, yet relatable personal identity that facilitates connection with lots of people and makes them powerful advocates for change. The way they facilitate connection with their personal identity and create group identification is by sharing their personal narrative. Yousafzai and Khan-Cullors wrote memoirs that portray their narratives as well as founded organizations—the Malala Foundation and Black Lives Matter—that now function as stable forces in their respective social movements. Watson also started an organization—HeForShe—to promote her feminist agenda. Each woman also gives speeches to share her narrative. Every time they share their story, no matter the form, they are performing their own personal narrative. Their narratives are undoubtedly true, but they are performances nonetheless.

**Part Two: Case Studies**

Khan-Cullors, Yousafzai, and Watson are all distinctly different women: Khan-Cullors grew up in poverty, Yousafzai lived in a middle class family, and Watson comes from privilege. Their differing backgrounds set them up for different types of advocacy: Khan-Cullors's influence and advocacy is completely self-made, Malala was self-made until the Taliban attacked her and she had the world at her

feet, and Watson's advocacy is powerful because of her fame and privilege. Though they are radically different women who work for different social movements—Black Lives Matter, girls' education, and feminism—they each employ the same set of tools. Each woman taps into similar modes of performance and storytelling, demonstrating that performance of personal narrative is a powerful model that works for many kinds of people and many social movements.

**Patrisse Khan-Cullors:**

Born into a poor neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley, Patrisse Khan-Cullors's life echoes the lives of many black people in America. Khan-Cullors has witnessed and borne first-hand the hatred, racism, abuses, and innumerable injustices against her people that are common in America. As a child, Khan-Cullors witnessed her teenage brothers get arrested for hanging out with their friends in alleyways, for wearing the same shirt, and for being young and black. As an adult, Khan-Cullors's house has been raided without a search warrant, and Khan-Cullors has watched many of her loved ones continuously be forced back into the American prison system without hope of reprieve. For these reasons, Khan-Cullors has become an artist, organizer, and freedom fighter, taking a multifaceted and holistic approach to the battle against racism, inequality, and injustice toward people of color.

Khan-Cullors's activism is rooted in a deep love for her family, biological and chosen. In her book *When They Call You A Terrorist* she said of her work: "In every

demand and in the faces of the people I meet in the streets, in the work, I see my mother and my brothers, my father and my sister" (203). Her family grounds her, assures her, and inspires her to keep working. She sees her family in everyone she works with. From her family, she learned both why she must fight and how she must fight. The arrests, abuse, and distrust her brothers and father endure(d) as black men in America are the reasons Khan-Cullors fights. These instances were the first signs Khan-Cullors saw as a young woman of systemic racism and violence toward people of color. At a young age, Khan-Cullors observed that her loved ones were significantly devalued because of the color of their skin.

Khan-Cullors's family also taught her the values that helped her become the resilient fighter she is today. From her father she learned how to love relentlessly and value a whole person—the good and the bad. Through him she first experienced public accountability and discovered the beauty of communal trust, accountability, and care without judgment. Khan-Cullors pushed through the hard times with her father, times when he was high and not really himself, saying, "If he matters to me at all then he has to matter to me at every moment" (Khan-Cullors 98). Khan-Cullors was unwilling to turn away from her father when he was low and not at his best. These values later became the foundation of her leadership strategies, making her an exceptionally compassionate and persistent community-oriented organizer. Khan-Cullors's mother worked from before sunrise to after sunset every day to support her family. From her Khan-Cullors learned to support those she loves through hard work and grit. Khan-Cullors's family acts as her roots, her support

system, providing her a strong foundation from which to grow, create, expand, dream, and inspire.

From a young age, Khan-Cullors was acutely aware of injustice and how to combat it. Not only has she observed and experienced injustices throughout her life, but she was also educated in a high school that valued the arts and social justice, advocating for a deep level of involvement and interpersonal communication as means of combating injustice. After high school, Khan-Cullors became involved with the Strategy Center in Los Angeles where she trained for years as an organizer, leader, and activist. Her experience at the strategy center and the connections she made there allowed her to branch off and facilitate her own organizations and protests. In 2012, in response to her mentally ill brother Monte's painful, brutal, and horrific experience in the prison system and other stories like his, Khan-Cullors produced her first performance art piece: *STAINED: An Intimate Portrayal of State Violence*. The piece was "a performance art piece that highlighted her brother's story of being brutalized in the county jail" (Cullors). She implemented audio recordings of her mother's phone calls to the prison, physical representations of what it must feel like to live in solitary confinement (as her brother did), and enlarged written experiences of abuse and torture endured by people of color in prison. The piece was so powerful and successful that it became the cornerstone of her still-existing nonprofit Dignity and Power Now: a "grassroots organization . . . that fights for the dignity and power of incarcerated people, their families, and communities" (ABOUT).

A year later, in response to Trayvon Martin's murder and Darren Wilson's subsequent acquittal, Khan-Cullors used the hashtag #blacklivesmatter on a post by Alicia Garza and the movement was born. After this initial hashtag, Khan-Cullors, Garza, and their friend Opal Tometi collaborated to make the Black Lives Matter movement—a call to action and a "response to state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism" (What We Believe). Black Lives Matter is a powerful, impactful movement known by nearly every American today. It has taken root and grown to reach every corner of the country; it has expanded to have chapters in numerous different cities and states; and it has provided people of color with a mantra, a purpose, and a way to fight. It is an invaluable, incredibly influential movement that already has and will continue to evoke change.

Khan-Cullors's approach to activism and political protest is both refined and full of complexities. She fights for black liberation using a variety of methods. To combat black imprisonment Khan-Cullors devises performance art pieces, like *STAINED*, that include others from the community, share her own story, and stand alone as performances. These events are very focused, yet intricate and highly inclusive of others. Khan-Cullors has political opinions that she is willing to fight for, but she is not willing to fight and win at the loss of her own or other people's humanity. She argues that she and her team "are envisioning and creating a new movement culture in which we care for the humanity of the people we're fighting for and with" (Khan-Cullors 251). This type of movement is deeply spiritual, human, and all-encompassing. Through it Khan-Cullors believes that she can healthily facilitate and instigate real change that will not dehumanize anyone. Khan-Cullors is

unrelenting in her attention to each individual's humanity and in her determination to reach her goal: "the goal is freedom. The goal is to live beyond fear. The goal is to end the occupation of our bodies and souls by the agents of a larger American culture that demonstrates daily how we don't matter" (Khan-Cullors 148).

In his article "Seizing the Stage," Jeffery C. Alexander identifies and discusses the layers of performance in first the Civil Rights Movement, specifically Martin Luther King Jr., and later the modern Black Lives Matter Movement, created by Garza, Khan-Cullors, and Tometi. Alexander attributes the success of both of these movements to their awareness and use of performance. He says of King: "If Martin Luther King Jr. is now considered by many to be the greatest American of the 20th century, it is not only because he was a political leader and a moral visionary; he was also an extraordinary dramatist" (Alexander 15). Alexander argues that King's powerful work as a dramaturge, a rhetorician, and producer and director of dramas is what brought his movement to life and made it effective. Alexander argues that King "choreographed" protests and made "dramas of sacrifice and redemption," breathing life into the movement and creating degrees of potential connection by dramatizing the black narrative. Rather than viewing the protests of the Civil Rights Movement as solely political, Alexander insists that they are political dramatizations.

The modern Black Lives Matter movement takes after King's Civil Rights movement in that BLM seeks to dramatize and subsequently make accessible to a wider (whiter) audience the narrative of the black working underclass. They, the founders of BLM and other members of the movement, do this in similar ways King

did. They choreograph protests, sit-ins, freedom rides, die-ins, and many other types of performance that have an obvious political agenda. These performances create room for empathy and role reversal: "Their ambition...was communicative, to create dramatic performances that would trigger sympathy for the suffering of underclass others...putting "ordinary people" (whites mostly) in the position of the oppressed" (Alexander 35). One way BLM does this is by filling the streets so that there is no room to walk—dramatizing what it feels like to be pushed out and unwelcome in a community.

These dramatized events that focus on helping others, mostly white people, understand the black experiences are virtual realities. Filling the streets so that there is no room for other people to walk is not something that normally occurs, but by dramatizing what it feels like to be black and unwelcome BLM creates an experience of a virtual reality. Something that's not real, but that allows them to feel and understand something outside their every day life.

Alexander notes that there are also layers to these many performances in the Civil Rights Movement and Black Lives Matter. First, there is the layer of the actual performance—the actual bodies in the street protesting, the call and response chants, the demands made. Second, there is the interpretation of those protests or actions by journalists, the media, critics, and observers. In this second layer, others perform their opinions of the action. They disseminate information to a larger, more general audience, influencing the general (white) public's opinion of the event.

Just as these movements are multifaceted and multilayered, so is Patrisse Khan-Cullors. Almost every aspect of her public life is a performance of sorts.

Something as basic as the community she surrounds herself with, what she would call her "chosen family" is a performance. By associating with certain people, she performs what she stands for. Khan-Cullors is also involved in several organizations that add layers to her persona and performance. In her non-profit Dignity and Power Now she uses her voice and narrative as a sister and daughter of incarcerated black men to urge change. She also employs her care for the black community as a black woman and mother. In Black Lives Matter she does much the same thing, just through a different platform and a different community. Additionally, Cullors creates theatrical art pieces in which she employs her personal narrative, her family's narrative, and the narratives of the community she surrounds herself with.

Patrisse Khan-Cullors's work is bursting with narrative. Khan-Cullors has a vast amount of material available—performance art pieces, blogs, interviews, a book, social media— and every single bit of it is narrative. In 2017, with help from Asha Bandele, Khan-Cullors published a book called *When They Call You A Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* in which Khan-Cullors writes her unique and complex narrative. Khan-Cullors shares her own life story, detailing her youth, relationship with her family, and current work, but in sharing her own story Khan-Cullors also shares other people's narratives—the narratives of her brothers, father, mother, friends, peers, and so many more. Other people's narratives are inextricably bound to Khan-Cullors own narrative. As Khan-Cullors promotes the movement Black Lives Matter, she works to amplify others' voices and stories to demonstrate just how many people have had experiences of injustice and racism. While Khan-Cullors's narrative is powerful and effective, she cannot and will not tell only her story; she is

determined to include others. By doing so, Khan-Cullors works to resignify the black experience in America.

Khan-Cullors tells the story of her biological father, Gabriel, integrating himself into her life after his incarceration. She tells what their first few outings together were and how odd it felt to have a new man introduced into her life and to become part of his family. While she tells this story, her story of meeting her father, Khan-Cullors also introduces her father's narrative. She writes that her father's family loves sports and remembers going to twelve-step meetings with him: "I remember my father talking about hiding, how he never wanted his family to see him high" (40). While she moves her own narrative forward, she also advances another.

Khan-Cullors performs a similar maneuver with her brother, Monte. As Khan-Cullors describes her younger years she also talks about her brother Monte. She describes him as a sweet older brother that would stay up late with her watching movies and tv shows. In chapter eight, "Zero Dark Thirty," Khan-Cullors writes of a traumatic experience when Monte was arrested. Though this is part of her story, it is also part of Monte's. She writes that the police officers who arrested Monte said: "We thought he was on PCP or something...He's huge!...Massive! They had to use rubber bullets on him" (116). These are words that Khan-Cullors herself heard, but by sharing her experience of hearing those words she simultaneously shares her brother's experience. In this situation Khan-Cullors heard and recognized that her brother was abused and mistreated, but her brother actually endured that mistreatment.

By including other narratives Khan-Cullors strengthens her own and provides more depth to the black American experience. By including her father, Gabriel's story, Khan-Cullors humanizes and redefines a black man with substance abuse issues. She illuminates Gabriel's honesty, sympathy, and joy, noting that he was the peacemaker of his family: "When the anger boils over, as it often does, it is Gabriel everyone goes to. Gabriel is Switzerland or maybe the original idea of the UN" (Khan-Cullors 42). Khan-Cullors and her audience understand Gabriel to be gentle, caring, and loving. These characteristics seem basic and innate to most humans, but by calling attention to the fact that her father possessed these qualities, Khan-Cullors demonstrates that people with substance abuse problems who have been to prison are still good humans. Similarly, incarcerated individuals are usually viewed as dangerous criminals who shouldn't interact with the outside world. By humanizing her father Khan-Cullors argues that people in prison are not always the dangerous criminals society thinks they are and should not be labeled as such.

Similarly, including her brother Monte's narrative humanizes incarcerated black males with mental disorders. Khan-Cullors remembers Monte's sweetness, his care, and his love. She depicts him as a loving family member and brother, someone many people can relate to. Like her father's story, Khan-Cullors shares this narrative to give a human face to the problem of mental illness in the justice system. Monte is a person, who has been mistreated in the criminal justice system due to his blackness and his mental illness. Khan-Cullors allows her audience to see him as more than just a victim. In every way she seeks to redefine the black experience as a

human experience. She depicts Monte as a whole person living with a mental disorder, rather than letting that disorder define him.

Inclusion of other narratives in addition to her own imbues Khan-Cullors's narrative with strength. In her work as an organizer Khan-Cullors functions as a magnet. She uses her talent for lifting others up to increase her agency. While she pursues her work, creates art, and fights injustice she attracts others to her and empowers them to tell their own story. These narratives bolster her own narrative, just as her narrative reinforces theirs. Thus her agency grows as their agency grows. It is a mutually beneficial relationship that adds incredible strength to the overall BlackLivesMatter Movement. This is especially important for Khan-Cullors because she was born into the least amount of agency. Her ability to influence and exert power has been completely self-made.

Khan-Cullors employs performance art as a way to distribute her narrative and encourage her social movement. Not only does it take creative compassion to lead in the holistic manner that Khan-Cullors leads in, but every protest, every public action that she facilitates is also a performance. Even a speech is a rhetorical performance in which one addresses an audience with a message. Protests are staged and planned. People participating in a protest perform chants, call and response, speeches, and are physically present, taking up space. Each of these are elements of performance that Khan-Cullors and her peers engage in regularly. Khan-Cullors also engages in more traditionally theatrical pieces of performance art. Since *STAINED*, her first piece of self-devised performance art, Khan-Cullors has produced a multitude of other performance pieces, including *The Rise of the Dandelions*,

dedicated to her father, *An Evening With Warriors: Speaking the Unspoken,* highlighting queer and trans stories from people of color, and POWER*: From the Mouths of the Occupied*, a piece on state violence and Black resilience. All of these pieces create theatrical virtual realities that encourage identification. Khan-Cullors uses her art to make a political point.

Khan-Cullors continues to share both her story and other people's stories in the performance art pieces she produces, pulling others to her and empowering them to share their story. In Seattle she produced a hugely successful piece called "POWER: From the Mouths of the Occupied," in which nine people told "personal stories highlighting their experiences with local state violence and their resilience as Black people" (Cullors). Her piece "Pushing the Envelope" was a solo performance, but it portrayed her relationship with her father while he was in prison. In this performance she included letters she and her father had written to each other as well as movement. Though she performs her own story in this piece—the story of her relationship with her father—she also breathes life into her father's story as an incarcerated man. Khan-Cullors shares her personal narrative as a way to encourage identification. Khan-Cullors then empowers people who identify with her and her movement to share their own narrative, strengthening her narrative and her movement.

**Malala Yousafzai:**

Malala Yousafzai is widely known as the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and "the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban." This epithet can be found on the cover of her book *I Am Malala* and is known by most everyone who knows about Malala. Born into the Swat Valley of Pakistan, Malala's culture has questioned her worth as a female since her birth. Her people, the Pashtuns, prefer boy babies over girl babies. When she was born people in her village "commiserated with [her] mother and nobody congratulated [her] father...For most Pashtuns it's a gloomy day when a daughter is born" (Yousafzai 13). In her culture girls are traditionally fed less, leaving eggs and fatty milk for the boys, and educated less, allowing boys to work and lead. Yousafzai writes, "There seemed no point in going to school just to end up cooking, cleaning and bringing up children" (40). How did Malala become the activist she is today if she was born into a society that expects so little from her, indeed, a society that works to oppress her and other women?

Malala's activism began with her father. From the moment she was born, her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, saw Malala as a wonder. Ziauddin viewed Malala just like their society viewed a boy baby. He added her name to his family tree, which until then had only included males and "even asked friends to throw dried fruits, sweets and coins into my cradle, something we usually only do for boys" (Yousafzai 14). From the very beginning Malala's father loved her and treated her specially. Her father is also an educator and promoter of education for all. He is a natural leader, like Malala, and was well acquainted with politics of education in Pakistan: "He believed that lack of education was the root of all of Pakistan's problems" (41). For

this reason, Malala grew up going to school and continued going even when many other girls left.

Malala and her father were both very outspoken advocates of girls' education in Pakistan and this is what got them in trouble with Pakistani leadership and the Taliban. Both were well-spoken and received awards and recognition for their speeches and advocacy. Before Malala became a target of the Taliban her father was a target. Malala feared for his life much more than she feared for her own, though ultimately, she was the one that was attacked. The Taliban did claim responsibility for her attack, though they deny it was because of her advocacy for girls' right to education. Malala grounds her identity in her family, but especially in her father. Because of him she received an education and a comrade who gave her the tools she needed to lead; her father gave her a sense of worth and purpose that characterizes the work she continues to do today.

While Malala has always been an advocate for girls' education, her story became much more widely known after she was shot. Since her attack, she has continued her advocacy in multiple ways. Malala cofounded The Malala Fund, an organization that promotes girls' right to education worldwide, with her father. Malala wrote a book called *I Am Malala* that tells her story in detail from before she was born to her present work. Malala also continues to speak worldwide about the importance of girls' education. Malala began her work advocating for girls' education at the young age of eleven and she continues that work today so that one day every girl will receive the education she deserves.

The Malala Fund is one way that Malala uses her narrative to promote social change. The fund promotes girls' education in three ways: advocating, investing, and amplifying. To advocate, Malala herself travels around the world, meets with people, and speaks about girls' education. Malala has travelled to many countries, including Nigeria, Syria, Rwanda, and Canada, in her campaign. She makes a point of speaking to leaders who can facilitate change, but she also always makes time to spend with girls. She encourages them to stay in school and to be vocal about their right to education. This reflects one of the Malala Fund's lines of work—amplifying young female voices.

The Malala Fund encourages other girls to share their stories and even gives them an outlet through the website. The Malala Fund's website features the stories of several girls that have fiercely fought for their education. One featured story is of Zaynab who was a refugee of three wars in Yemen, Somalia, and Egypt. Zaynab finally moved to America where she is pursuing her education, but she hopes to go back to her home country of Yemen as a human rights lawyer. Another story featured on the Malala Fund's website is of Sydney from Mexico. Sydney's community perpetuates gender stereotypes that girls shouldn't work and should stay at home. Overall Sydney's community discourages girls from going to school. Sydney, however, is determined to stay in school, become her community's first doctor, and set an example of a girl working hard and succeeding.

Featuring these stories, among others, demonstrates the success and purpose of the Malala Fund. The stories make it clear that the Malala Fund is reaching girls globally. Stories of girls who are like Malala show that it is possible to

effect change. Malala has effected change, and so will these girls. The stories also demonstrate the purpose of the Malala Fund, which is to support and empower girls like the ones they've featured. The Fund wants every girl to believe that she can be the first doctor or human rights lawyer in their communities. Making stories like these visible both supports those individual girls and communities and gives other girls the opportunity to see the story and feel empowered.

Another way the Malala Fund invests in girls' education is by investing in local education activists. It has a grant called the Gulmakai Network grant that is given to local education activists. One recipient of this grant was Habiba Mohammed, the co-director of Centre for Girls' Education in Nigeria. The Malala Fund understands that they cannot do all the work themselves and so they invest in other activists who support girls' education. Furthermore, by giving these activists a public association with the Malala Fund they increase their visibility worldwide. Malala and her Fund are globally known, so connection to her and her organization will undoubtedly increase visibility and success of these local activists.

It is important to note that The Malala Foundation and all the work that it does would not exist if not for Malala's personal narrative. Malala's lifelong activism laid the foundation for her current activism. Malala's agency as a long-time activist allowed her to create this foundation. If she and her father hadn't been vocal about their support for girls' education, then Malala wouldn't have been attacked, and her narrative would not have the same power that it does today. This is not to say that the Taliban attacking Malala was a good thing, but it certainly did push her into the spotlight. Furthermore, Malala's attack pushed her to make a decision. Following

such an event, she could either become a victim or a strong, powerful woman. Malala did not become a victim. She used her attack to bolster her campaign and narrative. She became not only an advocate, but a survivor who was put herself in physical danger for her social movement. The strength and power that comes from continued effort and perseverance is undeniable. This is why Malala's narrative is so powerful and impactful—her agency is strong. Without Malala's long-term efforts her foundation would not exist. Due to Malala's personal narrative the foundation is able to empower girls and local leaders across the world.

Like Khan-Cullors, as Malala tells her own narrative in her book it is impossible not to learn about her family members and their narratives. The member she talks the most about is her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai. She dedicates the chapter "My Father the Falcon" to him and his youth, demonstrating both how important he is to her personally and how critical his development into a leader and activist was to her own leadership. In this chapter Malala writes about a stutter her father had when he was young and how he overcame it. He practiced a speech repeatedly until he could give it without stuttering. Inclusion of this story illustrates that determination runs deeply in the Yousafzai family. Malala uses the narrative of her father to bolster her personal identity as a determined, educated Pashtun.

In the acknowledgements, Malala reminds her audience why she wrote a book: "My goal in writing this book was to raise my voice on behalf of the millions of girls around the world who are being denied the right to go to school and realize their potential. I hope my story will inspire girls to raise their voices and embrace the power within themselves" (Yousafzai 327). Malala shares her individual

narrative to inspire others and to help others get the opportunities they deserve. She uses her advocacy, her ability to support and empower others, to improve her ethos. Malala's desire to support others establishes goodwill, a crucial element of ethos. Without this Malala would not seem trustworthy. Her narrative and work to empower others functions as a beacon of hope and light for other young girls.

Malala's campaign for all girls' right to education is a social movement and every girl, local activist, and person who supports her is part of the movement. The movement for girls' education fits the criteria Charles Tilly sets forth. There is a campaign, a social movement repertoire, and WUNC displays. Malala's campaign is every girls' right to education worldwide. The social movement repertoire of the girls' education movement is vast, just like every social movement repertoire, but Malala's Social Movement Repertoire is narrower, consisting of Malala's speeches, her trips, her book, and her movie. Every year Malala takes several trips to different countries during which she meets with girls and leaders, learns about their lives and communities, and supports them in some way, usually financially. She has built schools, funded leaders, and funded education for some girls who cannot afford the tuition. These actions each constitute an element of the social movement repertoire, while also amplifying Malala's story. Every girl and local leader empowered by the foundation contributes their own events to the repertoire.

Malala and her foundation also promote and facilitate displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. The foundation reaches huge numbers of girls worldwide who all become part of the movement, at least by association. The foundation also works to depict girls as worthy of education. They share stories of

girls determined to make a difference in their communities or who already are making a difference in their community. The Malala Foundation serves as a unifying force for all these people. They present a unified message that all girls deserve education. Every person who supports the girls' education movement supports, by proxy, that unified message. Malala herself is the best embodiment of commitment to her cause. She has spoken out for girls' education her entire life and continues to do so despite being attacked and forced to leave her home. Being such a determined activist and distributor of her story helps Malala lead the movement for girls' education. While she spearheads the movement with her own narrative, she works to enable girls worldwide to share their story and get the education they deserve.

**Emma Watson:**

Emma Watson is most famously known for her acting work in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, but she is much more than just an actor. A graduate of Brown University with a degree in English Literature, Watson is a feminist activist who is very outspoken in her demand for gender equality. Watson's activism is unique from other activists because she became a famous celebrity before she became an activist. Watson uses her fame from *Harry Potter*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and other movies to create a platform for what she has to say. Watson takes advantage of the large following she has already created through acting to bring a lot more people into the realm of social activism.

For example, while on the Beauty and the Beast publicity tour Watson spoke about her controversial photo shoot with famous photographer Tim Walker. In this

Vanity Fair photo shoot Watson's chest was largely exposed. Responses to the pictures from the general public indicated that they (the public) thought exposing so much skin meant Watson could not be a feminist. In response, during a *Beauty and the Beast* publicity interview, Watson took the opportunity to explain that feminism is about choice, freedom, and liberation and that she saw no problem with the photos that were released and her identity as a feminist activist. A larger audience viewed this interview because it was made up of both *Beauty and the Beast* followers as well as Watson's own fans. By sharing her message about what feminism is in such a public way Watson reached large audiences, potentially exposing huge numbers of people to her social movement—feminism.

Watson is a UN Women Goodwill Ambassador and has helped start an organization called HeForShe. HeForShe was founded in 2014 and advocates for men to support women's rights. Watson argues that women's rights issues are men's rights issues as well and that everyone must work together for improvements to be made. If a woman isn't getting equal pay not only should she fight for her right to equal pay, but men, as the traditionally dominant gender, should also recognize that injustice and fight for that woman's right to equal pay. Watson's most famous speech was given to the UN as a launching of the HeForShe solidarity campaign.

Since HeForShe, Watson has joined another organization that has much the same agenda—TimesUp. TimesU is a "unified call for change from women in entertainment for women everywhere" (Home). This movement doesn't use the same frame as HeForShe, but it does work toward the same goal—women's equality. HeForShe's frame was one of men supporting women and feminism, while

TimesUp's frame is one of women supporting women. No matter the frame though, through both organizations Watson works to promote feminism and equal gender rights.

Watson's activism is quite different from Yousafzai and Khan-Cullors because of her privilege. She was a main actress in the Harry Potter movies, has acted in several other popular movies, is a model, and a known activist both for the feminist movement and for environmentalism. Watson's status as a public figure define her as a symbolic leader, uinter, and inspiration. Her privilege helped her to fame and that fame helped her become an effective activist. Her fame and privilege have given her agency and power to speak that exceeds the agency and power of a common person. While that does affect Watson's persona, her advocacy remains strong, constant, and flexible. Watson does not waiver in her advocacy for women and her belief that they deserve the same treatment as men. Watson not only speaks on behalf of feminism, but also uses her fame to make her message more impactful. Because she is a celebrity people look up to her and want to hear what she has to say.

In 2014 Emma Watson gave a speech to the United Nations as a Goodwill Ambassador for a movement called HeForShe. The goal of the speech is to resignify the word "Feminism", a word that has become a condensation symbol and highly polarized. In this speech Watson demonstrates rhetorical agency and power as a public figure and also presents concepts of denotation, connotation, and ideographs.

The word "Feminism" is a highly polarized word. Watson acknowledges this: "I have realized that fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous

with man-hating", but actively fights against this culturally accepted connotation of the word. Watson fights negative connotations of the word "feminism" by giving the literal definition of the word and defining it as something that matters to all genders: "Men...Gender equality is your issue too." This is an example of the denotation and connotation of a word being very different. The denotation is positive— equality for everyone—but the connotation is negative—feminism puts one gender above others and is essentially "man-hating".

In the speech Emma Watson strives to create a virtual experience that encourages identification and a desire for unity. To create a virtual experience Watson explains her experience with feminism and invites her audience to identify with her experience. She explains a chain of events that led her to not only see, but also experience first hand gender inequality. This series of events and experiences is personal, increasing the audience's trust in Watson as a speaker and evoking an emotional response, as all symbolic action does. The virtual social reality that Watson constructs encourages identification and as a result of shared identification, it encourages civic engagement in gender inequality issues. The goal of Watson's HeForShe speech is to encourage all people, but especially those that identify as men, to understand gender equality and to take up the mantle of fighting for gender equality.

Another way Watson encourages identification is by defining the HeForShe movement in terms everyone can agree with—in terms of freedom: "We can all be freer and this is what HeForShe is about. It's about freedom." Freedom is an ideograph, an elevated abstract word that represents many non-tangible ideas and

beliefs. By associating the word "freedom" with her movement Watson makes it nearly impossible for people to disagree with her. Very few people will say that they disagree with freedom. By using such a word Watson is saying that if you support freedom, you support my movement and therefore gender equality.

As a feminist, Watson has entered a social movement with a long history. Feminists like Judith Butler, Gloria Steinem, and many more have fought for equal rights and opportunities for years. Watson's activism is different from many others because of her celebrity status. Rather than working to share other people's stories and narratives like Khan-Cullors does, Watson uses her status to get the word out to as many people as possible. Through her position she maximizes the number of people who hear her definitions and understandings of feminism. She shares her narrative of how those definitions came to be and so helps others connect to and understand feminism. This is vital to the movement, as many people in the general public believe that feminism is negative and synonymous with "man-hating." Watson uses her celebrity status to encourage women and men to be free and liberated from traditional gender roles.

Watson's actions following this speech have demonstrated that she is a flexible activist. Public opinion is fickle and changes constantly. Watson has demonstrated her ability to keep up with changing public interest by switching her focus to new, more popular organizations. This is what happened when Watson's HeForShe movement seemed to trickle out only to be replaced by Hollywood's TimesUp movement. By allowing herself to shift from HeForShe to TimesUp, Watson works to keep herself in the forefront of feminist action. Her visibility as a feminist

remains constant, though the organization may not. Importantly, while Watson's flexibility keeps her in the public eye as a feminist, it does still present her as a fickle activist. An activist that keeps her eye on what's popular rather than what she stands for. There are two sides to Watson's flexibility: one in which she keeps up with the times as a way to promote her movement and another in which she promotes her movement as a means to achieve fame. The ethos Watson' presents in her speech is that of an educated, privileged woman who cares about women's rights. This ethos supports the view that Watson changes movements to keep up with her audience, rather than to maintain fame. No matter the movement, Watson continues to use her personal narrative and elevated status to promote the feminist movement worldwide.

**Conclusion:**

Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Malala Yousafzai, and Emma Watson perform their personal narrative to facilitate individual and group identification with themselves and their social movements. Each woman has founded an organization on the strength of her personal narrative and works to encourage others to both join their respective social movements and to share their own personal narratives. Their work in social movements all aligns with the principles Tilly set forth about a social movement: they have a campaign, employ a social movement repertoire, and display worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. These three elements of their work give it body and shape, but their voices and stories would not be so powerful

without the element of performance. Since Lorenz von Stein's published the first definition of a social movement in 1959, which highlighted the working class continuously working together to gain power, our understandings of social movements have shifted. I have argued that identifying and understanding the function of performance, especially personal narratives, provides a modern understanding of social movements. Performance is what makes the campaign, social movement repertoire, and WUNC displays effective. Dramatic performances of values, identities, and protests move campaigns forward by giving them depth and by fostering collective identification. Khan-Cullors, Yousafzai, and Watson embody this new, performance-oriented understanding of personal narrative within social movement. They lead with powerfully performed narratives, urging others to work together to fix a common grievance. While they act as leaders in their social movements, each woman understands how to empower others. It is only by empowering others that change will be made because each woman is working not to change individuals, but to change the societies they live in. Despite the differences in their narratives, the goal of each woman is somewhat similar—to foster identification and improve the world they live in. Khan-Cullors seeks to eliminate systemic racism and injustice, Yousafzai works so that every girl has an education, and Watson promotes gender equality. The narrative each woman has developed and shared is slowly but surely facilitating change in our world.

Works Cited

"ABOUT." *Dignity and Power Now,* Dignity and Power Now, dignityandpowernow.org/about-us/.

Alexander, J. C. "Seizing the Stage: Social Performances from Mao Zedong to Martin Luther King Jr., and Black Lives Matter Today." *TDR: The Drama Review,* vol. 61 no. 1, 2017, pp. 14-42. *Project MUSE,* muse.jhu.edu/article/649749.

Cullors, Patrisse. "Art." *Patrisse Cullors,* Patrisse Cullors, patrissecullors.com/art/.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Routledge Introduction to Theatre and Performance Studies.* Edited by Ramona Mosse and Minou Arjomand, Routledge, 2013.

HeForShe. "Emma Watson HeForShe Speech at the United Nations | UN Women 2014." *YouTube,* YouTube, 22 Sept. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0Dg226G2Z8&feature=youtu.be.

"Home." *Time's Up Now,* www.timesupnow.com/.

Khan-Cullors, Patrisse, and Asha Bandele. *When They Call You A Terrorist.* St. Martin's Press, 2017.

"Personal Identity." *Self, Identity, and Social Movements,* by Viktor Gecas, vol. 13, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 93-109.

Tilly, Charles. *Social Movements, 1768-2004.* Paradigm Publishers, 2004.

Watson, Emma. "Emma Watson Gender Equality Is Your Issue Too." *UN Women,* UN Women, 20 Sept. 2014, www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/9/emma-watson-gender-equality-is-your-issue-too.

"What We Believe." *Black Lives Matter,* Black Lives Matter,

blacklivesmatter.com/about/what-we-believe/.

Yousafzai, Malala, and Christina Lamb. *I Am Malala.* Back Bay Books, 2013.